



ORAL FITNESS FACT SHEET

Choose Your Weapons – Toothbrush

Your most important weapon against oral disease is your toothbrush. For best results, use it twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

Choose a toothbrush with a size and shape that fits you. Your toothbrush should have:

- A small, multi-tufted head (1" by 1/2" or smaller) that can easily fit around your back teeth.
- Soft or ultrasoft nylon bristles with rounded ends that won't hurt your gums.
- A long, wide handle that fits your hand comfortably and firmly.



Electric toothbrushes work well if they are used properly. Use slow movements that cover each tooth. The most effective ones have soft nylon bristles and move in a clockwise/counter-clockwise motion (rotational oscillation).

Toothbrush Safety

- Avoid medium and hard bristle toothbrushes! They can wear away your gums and teeth.
- Use light force. Too much pressure causes the bristles to bend and can wear away your gums.
- Do not share toothbrushes because of the risk for infection.

Take Care of Your Toothbrush

- Rinse your toothbrush clean after every use.
- Allow it to air dry. If you use a cover, make sure it has small holes for airing to prevent growth of bacteria.
- Store it in an upright position.
- Change your toothbrush or toothbrush head (if you're using an electric toothbrush)
 - Before the bristles become worn and bend outward.
 - Every three to four months.
 - After being sick.





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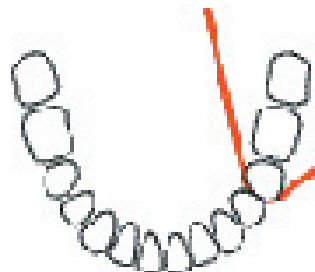
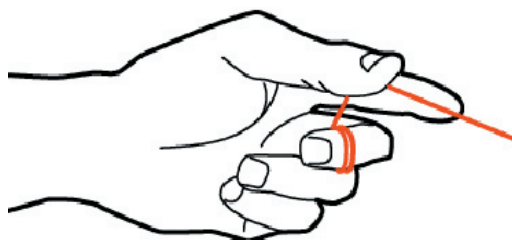
PMCS Your Mouth!

You control whether you get cavities or not. Taking care of your mouth the right way will keep you fit and ready. Just like a good motor sergeant uses a PMCS schedule (preventive maintenance, checks and services) to keep his/her vehicles running, you need to PMCS your mouth!

What should your PMCS schedule look like?

Daily

1. **Watch what you put in your mouth.** Everything that goes into your mouth affects your Oral Fitness!
 - Limit sugar-sweetened drinks (like sodas, punch, and sports drinks).
 - Limit sugary, sticky, or starchy foods.
 - Avoid or cut back on tobacco use, which can cause tooth decay, gum disease, and oral cancer.
2. **Brush two or three times a day, every day.** Brushing for about 2 minutes with **fluoride** toothpaste is one of the best ways to prevent cavities. Fluoride helps repair early stage tooth decay. Other brushing tips include:
 - Use a gentle circular motion and a soft toothbrush.
 - Do **not** rinse your mouth after brushing. Spit out the excess toothpaste.
 - Don't eat or drink anything for at least 30 minutes after you brush so the fluoride will stay on your teeth longer.
3. **Floss once a day.**
 - Flossing helps remove bacteria and food in between teeth, where a toothbrush can't reach.



Wrap the end of the floss around your middle finger and use your index finger to guide the floss. Insert the floss between your teeth (pull gently side to side to get it through the tight spots, but be careful not to saw your gums!) Gently move the floss up and down against the tooth in back, then against the tooth in front.

Monthly

Perform an oral cancer self-exam every month if you are at risk for oral cancer. Risk factors include:

- Tobacco, marijuana, or alcohol use.
- Sun exposure.
- Poor nutrition (lack of fruits and fresh vegetables).
- Viruses (such as Papilloma virus or genital warts).

Yearly

See your dentist for a dental exam and cleaning every year to detect problems early and to avoid becoming a Dental Casualty.



Directorate of Health Promotion and Wellness

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/oralfitnessmain.aspx>

